



DECEMBER 2010 ISSUE

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Dear Friends,

Happy Holidays! We are in a time of celebration, hope, possibility, and joy. The stories told over the next month are stories that have been told for generation after generation. Telling stories, creating myths, and sharing our own life narratives is an essential aspect of creating community. Listening to one another, truly hearing one another's experiences, provides witness to the power of relationships. It is through these moments, especially during holiday seasons, that we can be rejuvenated and continue to survive even when hope feels impossible.

I am an unashamed lover of Christmas music. I actually sing along and bob my head to the tunes when I'm standing in line at a store. Passengers in my car are forced to hear Mariah Carey sing, "All I want for Christmas is You" every fifteen minutes. I love Christmas music even as I understand its overwhelming presence to be a reminder of Christian dominance and religious intolerance in our country. I love the joy proclaimed in Christmas music even as I understand that Christianity has been used to justify great violence around the world. I love the tunes reminding us that we better be good for goodness sake even though the idea of Santa Claus watching my every move is incredibly creepy.



There are many myths surrounding this holiday season. Whether it's the story of Jesus' birth, the story of a menorah that stayed lit for eight miraculous nights, or the story of a jolly man who flies around with reindeer, they are all stories of possibility and hope that come out of the communities that tell them. These stories are all told in different ways and are attributed to different beginnings. One of my favorites is the suggestion that Santa Claus is one of the surviving gods, Odin, of Germanic Pagans. Odin was the god of wisdom, magic, poetry, and prophecy. He was closely associated with Yule and would bring presents to children in exchange for their assistance feeding his horse (not unlike the carrots one leaves for some flying reindeer I know). As Christians theologically colonized the Germanic people they, like many other colonized people, transformed their traditions to appear Christian while actually holding on to their own rituals right under the noses of the colonizers. This form of resistance is common around the world, especially in response to Christian expansionism, and leaves morsels of hope and resilience for us to uncover through the ages.

Much of the modern myth of Santa Claus is complex to navigate. I remember a friend of my sister's asking her mother if the kids down the street were bad because Santa never brought them very good presents. Her mother decided it was more important to tell her child there is no Santa Claus because the family down the street was poor and she did not want to raise a child who thought that Santa Claus only brought presents to children who came from families with money. I have learned from many Christmas specials and fantastically predictable Christmas movies that the spirit of Santa Claus is not the receiving of expensive or fancy gifts. Rather the spirit of Santa Claus is the spreading of joy, the belief in magical possibilities, and the sharing of love with friends and strangers.

So what do these magical possibilities look like from behind the walls and in the ongoing struggle against the violence of the prison system? Where do you find hope even while stuck in hopeless spaces? I know that I hope the newsletter we put out on a monthly basis can provide some feeling of connection that can illuminate the darkness some. My hope for this holiday season is that you all can see yourselves as sparks of light projecting rays of potential. This potential is the end of the prison system. Before we reach that goal this potential is your voices proclaiming your right to be treated with dignity and respect. This is a season of giving, so as we push back against the system let us also remember to give love to each other so we can have the strength to continue. Because indeed, once there were no prisons, that day will come again!

In faithful love,
Jason

Shout out from John Chestnut

Dear Black & Pink Family,

I pray that this missive finds you all in the very best of health mentally as well as physically. As for myself, I'm maintaining in an intelligent and spiritual way. My name is John Chestnut aka "Chestnut," I'm 31 years old, a Black male. I'm incarcerated at Florida State Prison in a one man cell. I only get to shower and shave 3 times a week and also get to go to the Rec yard 3 times a week for 2 hours. I've been living like this since 2003. The reason why I been on it so long is because I used to get in a lot of fights. But I'm now leaning back, trying to make it back in open population so I can go to the Law Library when I want to. The reason why I'm here in lockdown in the first place is because when I was on the compound, a dude was disrespecting my girl, aka Queen, and she told me about it. I asked the dude 2 times to leave her alone, the 3rd time I took action. I'm Bi 'cause at this time I still like females too. I like all gay people, but I'm attracted to the feminine type. But like I said, I like all my team-mates.

A shout out to James aka Jasmine, I feel your pain, but don't give up- feel good about who you are, it might help to remember there's always someone in a worse situation. I lost my mother December 16, 2009, I thought I was going to lose my mind. But I prayed, and I'm still standing strong. My prayers go out to you- keep 'ya head up. And to Ms. Kitty, stand up for yourself but stay out of trouble.

Love & Peace, God Bless,
John Chestnut

Love from Jamee

Dearest Black & Pink, [Aug letter, typed 11/20/10]

To all my Sisters and my Brothers out there, whether you are struggling against the Prison Industrial Complex, or you are loving free in the world, I reach out to you to give you my support & my love.

I am a transgender woman, incarcerated in Nevada, and I too am fighting against an amoral and unjust "legal" system. Sadly, we girls here in Nevada don't seem to have any support/advocacy groups to help us here in this dusty, morally ambiguous state.

I am currently embroiled in a major Civil Complaint ("1983") vs. the N.D.O.C. And its medical department, in a fight to be re-instated onto my E.H.T.'s, as well as numerous other Civil Rights violations and Constitutional issues. You know, the "basic stuff," like being treated like the human beings we are.

Being in prison is tough. Being transgender can certainly be tough too. Being transgender in prison in a whole thing unto itself. I can only reach out you with words and with my heart, but know that I send to each of you some of my strength and love. And I love you all, I do. I don't know what's it's like to be sexually assaulted or victimized like that. Can't even imagine it. But I do suffer the "slings and arrows" of constant derision and demeaning comments and attitudes which are meant to de-humanize us. We all must, no matter our challenges, remain STRONG, for ourselves and for each other. The only way we will ever gain the respect and the recognition we deserve in this laughably "forward thinking" society is to stay strong, and to fight at every opportunity against hate and misunderstanding. We must be patient and educate ourselves and those who wish to learn about us and our complexities, and to stand up to those who don't.

Fifteen years in this horrible place, convicted wrongly of something I wasn't even physically capable of doing (with my "victim" even saying I was (am) innocent), yet I keep my head held high. You all do it, too. We as transgendered and queer folk, have so much strength just to survive the lives we call "normal." Realize that and "stay up!"

I love you each, and I love you all. Hugs & kisses from me to you.

Love & Strength,
Jamee Deirdre Hundley

Bryan's Story

Dear Black & Pink,

I was bullied in high school. I thought of suicide on a regular basis back then. The only advice I could have for young people is to fight! Not with your fists, but with your mind. Keeping looking for help until you find it. If your parents won't help, then tell the school, if they won't help, find someone online who will cause all sorts of hell in the community, find a lawyer to file a lawsuit, organize a rally, and if all else fails, get home-schooled or switch schools. Treat this as if it were an intervention with your own life to save. People who care are out there, you don't have to suffer in silence.

One final word of caution: don't even think of doing something illegal, like bringing a weapon to school. Despite what our government says about caring for kids, they would like nothing more than to lock you up and throw away the key if you snap.

When I am finally released from this prison, my whole life will revolve around exposing the bullies in power as the frauds that they are. Everyone needs to do their own part. I wish you all the best of luck!

-Bryan Becker

"Lost, forgotten, or walked away?"

Every person I considered my friend, I helped them unconditionally, loved them for who they are, unconditionally. Never once had I turned my back to them or walked away to forget.

I know and understand that there are a lot of people who have gone through this and suffered the broken pieces in the end. Just like me.

Friends out on the street, friends here in prison, from my perception, all threw in the towel.

It's a slap in the face, a big fuck you.

I am not more than 100 ft from a group of people I had whole heartedly believed were my friends. Not one word from them. And here's where it really sucks: we are all connected to the same vent system. Everyone can talk to each other on the block I'm on.

My thought of what did I do wrong? what happened? are they mad? At least tell me something so we can make this better, but No Answer. No one is there.

A friend of mine, "Rose," time and time again, I have called her name with no answer. I even spent money I don't have on a Farsi-English English-Farsi dictionary some 10 months ago to learn her language.

Am I lost to them? Did they forget me? Did they walk away from our friendship?

I don't have anybody. Family doesn't write because of who I am. I haven't had any pen pals for almost 7 years.

This hurts. It's painful. Hard time at its worst. And I hate every bit of it.

Tears streak down my face and I wonder, why cry for these people? I'm a ghost to them, a faded memory that they don't want to revive.

There are those of you who have gone through this. Well, guess what? I'm your friend.

I may not know your names or where you are but, I am your friend, all of yours. Believe it.

This helps me to know I have friends still yet to meet. Someday we will come together.

My name is Cameron Willis Willett, aka Cail. I'm 24 years old. I'm bisexual. I have 2 years 8 months left in prison.

What's your name? What's your story? I need a friend.

By Cameron Willett -- Cail --

Power to Alter a Broken System

Excerpts from Rev. Pierce's Letter

Black & Pink,

In two days, it will be the year anniversary of my incarceration, and I parole Feb. 25th, 2011. I seriously believe that next to regaining my sanity, coming out of the closet was the most difficult thing I could do in this lifetime. Mainly because I was doing them both at the same time.

I'm bisexual, but my entire life was so heavily buried in illicit activities, with such murderous violent homophobic criminals, that at 13 I made the choice to bury that part of me. I was one of those people who got more violent with age. While I was treating my Bipolar I figured out that burying my identity was driving me crazier. We all know it's difficult to come out, that's not news to anyone. In the process, I think I burned every bridge I ever built. Being me, I keep trucking.

I never experienced the kind of discrimination many of my brothers and sisters write about, and I'm blatantly and militantly out there. I look like a biker (long hair, goat tee, tattoos, big man, in all ways :)). But looks don't stop harassment. The transgenders and gays on my yard were always being harassed by the pigs, and discriminated against, and they just accepted it because of hopelessness, fear, ignorance of the law. I was being educated on criminal law at 8 years old. If you break the law, you better know the law, I was taught. So it took me a bit of time (a couple months), and I learned enough Civil Law to get the cops in huge trouble. I jumped into the fire for about 2½ years.

In the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), I couldn't defend someone else. So I got on to the 10 most homophobic cops radar and made sure they never lost sight of me and pissed them off with every bit of nuisance paperwork I could file. I ended up losing property, I recorded that. I got charged with aggravated battery on a peace officer, and referred to the District Attorney for 25-to-life for that charge, I recorded all that. I lost 2 jobs because I was gay with paperwork to prove it, I recorded that. I had a 1½ year hard core paper trail against over 35 prison officials and administrators and filed a big ass sexual orientation harassment and discrimination civil lawsuit. I didn't have enough to win, but I had enough to cost 'em well over \$100,000 in legal court fee/attorney General fees, and I had 3 other lawsuits in the works. I sent them prior copies to make crystal clear my intentions. They took 15% of the main offenders pay for at least until their next pay raise, and mandated they receive training in sensitivity in dealing with LGBT. The biggest offenders were also transferred.



The harassment and discrimination still happens. But it's not seen openly anymore, and the cops don't verbally degrade us for enjoyment, at least not openly anymore. I'm just one voice, if everyone would join me that all would change.

I was shortly after sent to the best and gayest prison in California- Mule Creek. This is an example that each of us has the power to alter a broken system. It's hard work, but if you do nothing it will just be hard living. Jason quoted Audre Lorde- "When I dare to be powerful- to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid." That hits it on the head, fear isn't important when you can make a positive change, make our community better for each other. Burns, bruises, cuts, and scrapes all heal, but a loss of life due to unnecessary abuse, that doesn't have a chance to heal. So I happily take my abuses to gain ammunition for change, will you join me?

I am Rev. Michael David Pierce, you can publish my whole name. Who are you, make your precious voice heard. Be proud, say it loud.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Michael David Pierce

“So Called Freedom”

Prison is not the place to be, commit a crime and then you'll see— That once you're here, you'll never be free, to fit back into society. The milk is powdered, the coffee is too. Don't forget the juice can kill you. The guys are cute, the guards are mean. Don't forget that you work for free. Commissary is a very nice thing, only when there's money to be made. Now, we come to the end of your sentence, seems you finally got your 'penance.' So now go home and say you're free, even though you're never gonna be.

--Timothy Johnston

“My Life”

Mother, Father, I had none, I was adopted by a loving one. She taught me the difference from right and wrong, now I'm singing a different song. When I found out all too well, that my genes would drag me straight to hell. Now I sit behind a razor fence, wondering when it'll all make sense. Three and a half years to go, then I'll be free 'so, so.' But until that final date draws near, my mind says it pretty clear. You screwed up and now you'll pay, in TDC is where you'll stay.

--Timothy Johnston

“SR”



Six pack abs so nice and firm, with a face that's so damn stern. He's got skin so soft and smooth, and not a single hair to remove. Small round ass so firm and tight, how I want to squeeze it every night. He can never know that I exist, otherwise I'll get hit with his fists. Arms so big and strong, please lord don't let me be wrong. My heart says yes, my mind says no, oh God I pray he doesn't go. Things are now different than in my past, I prefer the dick in the ass. Whether this is the path for me, I guess I'll have to wait and see. I believe the time is near, for me to finally show no fear. I only want this to show, that I care about him so much for him to know. Living like this is hard you see, trying to blend with every scene.

--Timothy Johnston



By Victor "Fuzzy" Martinez

"Charades"

When the make-up comes off,
And the lights go out;
When no one is listening,
Or gathered about-
Who are you?
Do you really know...
Lights, camera, distraction-
Now back to the show!
It's "The Land of Make Believe,"
Where nothing is real.
It's where Pretenders pretend
To be pretenders-
What an enigma!
A splendid mind bender...
Knock-knock,
"Who's there?"
No answer-
Return to sender!
Persons unknown.
The residual of an individual,
Are utterly despicable!
She's clearly a clone;
He's not the original...
Life's like charades,
A "game to be played"-
The Royal Ball,
For one and all,
Like a silly Masquerade!

-Ms. Pat



"Castaway"

Do you know what it's like to be dis-owned?
Waking up every morning being alone?
Do you know what it's like to sit here all night and cry?
Closing your eyes and always wondering why?

Do you know what it's like to be scared to dream?
Wanting to just stand up and scream?
Do you know what it's like to feel shame?
Always a number, never a name?

Do you know how it feels not having any hope?
Looking at life knowing you can't cope?

Do you know how it feels to wonder if you can maintain?
Wondering when you will finally go insane?

This is how I feel everyday,
But who really cares about society's castaway???

By Dale Sloss, In Solitary Confinement

I get escorted in chains, "whenever" I exit
my cell...
Two guards "a gun tower" a tense moment, under
their watchful spell...
Like an animal "another number" just a body
tag...
For my blood "is toxic" a slow death
this painful drag....
Constantly finishing to live forever, I don't
want to die...
But nothing lasts forever, "not me" only
the rainbow, and the sky...
I'm thankful to have lived and shared this dream...
...but I regret having to be "locked up" to possibly die,
in this concrete stream...

-Mikee, CA Prisoner

"A Concrete Stream"

Fred Phelps: We're Bullyproof



Two people get a picture making Fred Phelps uncomfortable.

Fred Phelps of the Westboro Baptist Church which runs the website GodHatesFags.Org visited Boston in early December. The website particularly targets Matthew Shepard, the young gay man who was brutally murdered whose story was turned into the play and movie "The Laramie Project". His mother Judy Shepard is a powerful, loving woman who travels giving speeches. Phelps' group has few if any allies, as they have made a habit of picketing funerals with hateful signs! They picketed an Islamic center, a Jewish organization, and a production of the Laramie Project. Apparently, they fund their cross country trips with money from lawsuits against people who attack them! They also have young children hold their signs.

"When You Love Someone"

When you love someone
you should love all colors
if they hate you because
who you chose to be
decline the hate
and continue to be free
God doesn't agree
but yet he understands
be who you were made to be
even when circumstances are demanding
"obviously"
you are someone
to love someone

By: Queen B, Bianca Johnson
Dedicated to Leslie

The Boston Sass Attack Radical Cheerleaders wrote a cheer to the tune of La-roux's hit "Bulletproof" in response!



Cheer Lyrics:

Strapped it on and messed around,
Queerz are fun, don't put us down,
We'll never let your hate sink in too deep.

We don't want you in our town,
Your messages are full of hate
Your information's based on bigotry.

You're burning bridges, shore to shore,
Us queers are hott and so much more,
We love to love our rad queer family.

Lubed it up and ate it out
Queerz are fun, we're here to shout:
"We'll never let your hate sink in too deep!"

This time Fred Phelps we'll be Bullyproof x2

We won't take this sittin' down,
Our fists are up, we're hella proud
Rights aren't enough, let's keep on rioting

Fags, dykes, trans, and kinky folks
Are here to say, "your signs are jokes"
Your hetero norms are so last century.

L G B T are so fine
Life's too short for us to stop -
Oh baby, come here and let's make out.

We won't take this sittin' down,
Our fists are up, we're hella proud
Rights aren't enough, let's keep on rioting

This time Fred Phelps we'll be Bullyproof ...

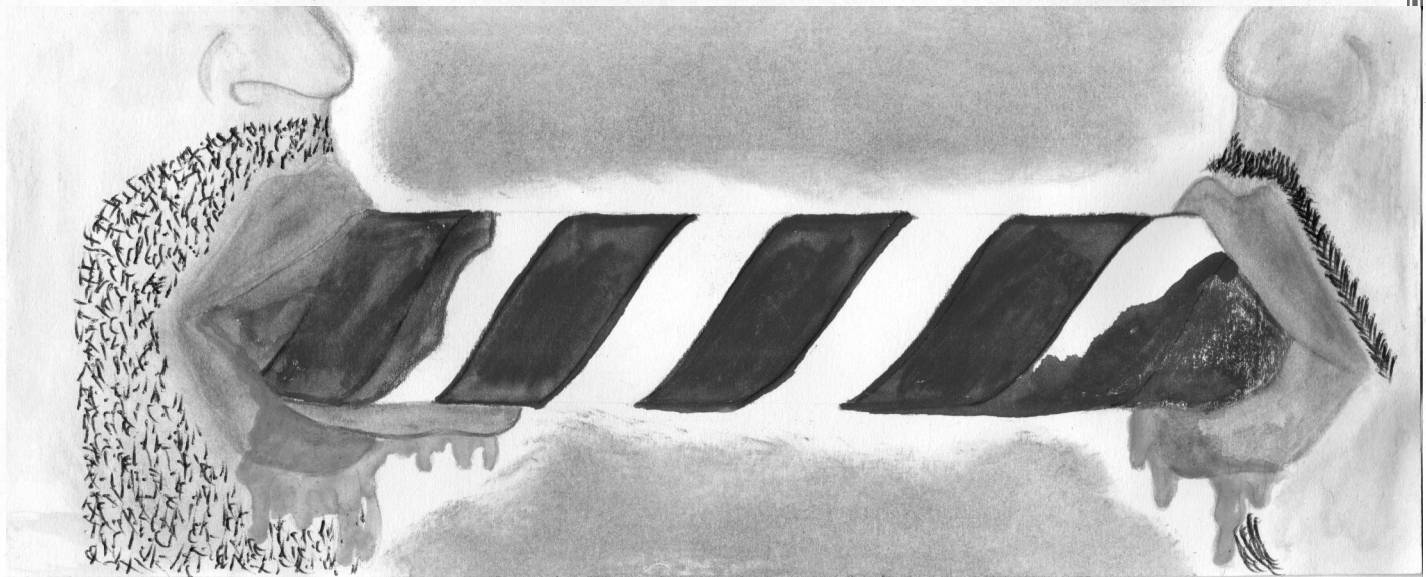
"You"

You cut, I bleed
 You want, I need
 You cry, I fear
 You smile I sneer
 You love, I hate
 You're destiny, I'm twisted fate
 You're day, I'm night
 I'm death, you're life
 You're heaven, I'm hell
 You're silent, I tell
 You climb, I crawl
 To destiny's wall we departed with guilt
 Tore down the fortress we built
 Our memories are faded, our love is jaded
 The pain, the lies, once again I severed the ties
 The passageway we both knew to our darn Kingdom has been doomed.

Carmen Hernandez



Jasmine Jones



Silas Humphries

"Lost for Words"

I am lost for words because I have been away from you for way too long. It feels like a time when you lose a close friend, that you feel like they are gone forever. I now know what it is like to lose a friend and family member, but to lose you, is like I lost an important part of my life. It is like an eternity since I have seen you, heard your voice, or even read your words on paper. It hurts me to know that I am here without you and that you are there without me. I wish I could have said that I am sorry I have to leave, I will always think of you and miss you, and good-bye. I know you are out in the world alone, while I am trapped inside myself. This is why I am "lost for words."

--Daniel Holland

Prisons and HIV: Reflecting on World Aids Day

There has been a lot of good news lately in the battle against AIDS.

The United Nations declared that the number of new HIV cases worldwide has dropped by a fifth over the past decade. A new pill has been shown to slash new infections without requiring patients to take many different pills many times a day. And the pope, shifting away from decades of harmful theology, said he could approve condom use in HIV-positive men as an act of responsible sexuality.

There is, however, a deeply troubling lag in AIDS policy in the U.S. and around the globe that might well undercut all this good news. AIDS is still rampant in prisons.

Prisons are disease incubators. They are dirty and overcrowded, hygiene is poor, drugs make their way in and risky sexual contact is common. Untreated and left to spread, HIV — along with tuberculosis and other nasty infections — mutate into forms that our current drugs may not treat.

With more than 2 million Americans incarcerated, the U.S. has one of the largest prison populations in the world. And nearly 2 percent of those in jail or prisons are HIV positive.

This is a much higher rate than in the general population, where about 1 million Americans — or about .3 percent — are estimated to have the virus.

In any given year, about 20 percent of those with HIV pass through our correctional system.

Some other countries are even worse. The World Health Organization puts HIV rates among prisoners in Argentina and Brazil at over 4 percent with some prisons running close to 20. Russia, the Ukraine and Estonia have upwards of 5 percent of their inmates infected. And in some African countries, 40 percent of those in jail are HIV-positive.

Prison health care in the U.S. is lousy. And HIV treatment is no exception. Consider this recent example: The prison system in Massachusetts has decided not to let inmates with HIV keep their medicine in their cells. They must now go down to the infirmary several times a day. At the infirmary, they stand in line near other prisoners who are sick thereby making it likely that, due to their weakened immune systems, they will get sick, while they get hazed for having AIDS. A lawsuit filed last week contends that the move to require treatment at the infirmary is driven by a desire to cut costs not concern for the prisoners.

The best chance to do something about AIDS in prisoners is when they are incarcerated. We can make sure they get tested for HIV, take their medicine, learn about safe sexual practices, have access to condoms and learn about the risks of dirty needles they too often use in shooting-up or in getting tattoos.

In the U.S. and in a lot of other countries around the world, prison is the only place inmates have any chance at contact with a nurse, public health official or AIDS counselor.

Excerpted from Arthur Caplan is director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.



World Aids Day, December 10th
 National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, February 7th
 National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, March 10th
 National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, March 20th
 National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, May 19th
 Caribbean American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, June 8th
 National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day, September 18th
 National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, September 27th
 National Latino Aids Awareness Day, October 15th



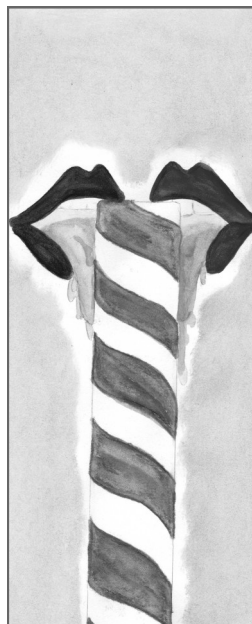
Freddie Goessler



Michael Hart



Silas Humphries



Newsletter Submissions

Free "Outside" Pen-Pal Requests

Free Prisoner 2 Prisoner Pen-Pal List

Art Related Letters

Ideas for Black & Pink

write to b&p!

Black and Pink– Newsletter

Black and Pink– Pen Pal

Black and Pink– P2P List

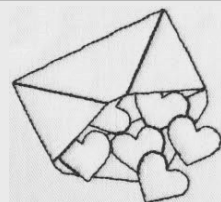
Black and Pink Art– Reed Miller

Black and Pink– Developing Leadership

c/o Community Church of Boston

565 Boylston St

Boston, MA 02116



LEGAL: Consider writing to Lambda Legal for support or referrals with legal issues that you are having. "Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bi-sexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work."

Lambda Legal, National Office 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005, 212-809-8585

SURVIVORS: Just Detention International provides support for prisoners who are survivors of sexual abuse. Write them at the legal address below for a packet. Each packet includes an introductory letter, a list of local resources, fact sheets, publications about recovery from sexual abuse, and a letter of hope from another survivor.

Ms. Melissa Rothstein, Esq., 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010

Update from Black & Pink Art

Dear Black & Pink Artists,

This has been both a rough start and incredible year! Upwards of 80 artists have got in touch or sent in their work! I'm so proud to be part of this project, and to work with such talented and kind people. Since May, we've sold over \$300 worth of art: drawings, leatherwork, cards etc. At times, we get so many letters that it's hard to keep up! But keep writing, and we will keep writing back. We'll be participating in Holiday Handjobs, a queer/kinky craft fair, on December 10th! We're also trying to get hangings in local coffee shops. A trial run at Amy's Place in Buffalo, NY got 2 items sold and "was a hit!" So keep up the creative work, and we'll keep writing, scanning, posting online, and selling! Love, Reed Miller